

American Media Reception--RTF 386 Fall 1999  
Unique # 06775 UT-G  
TH 9:30-12:30 CMA 3.108 {syl-47}  
M 7:30-10:00--CMA 3.120

Janet Staiger  
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Office Hours: Th 2:00pm-4:00pm

AMERICAN MEDIA RECEPTION

## **Course Prerequisites**

1. Consent of instructor
  2. Graduate standing

## **Course Content and Goals**

We will attempt to survey the research on the historical reception of film, radio, and television in the United States from its beginnings to present. This daunting project will be made easier by the many gaps that need to be filled. Sample topics will be: issues about real spectators of early films, the public functions of radio in the 1920s, stars and fan productions, romances, gay readings of the classical era, African-American responses to mainstream programs, and so forth. The first couple weeks will be an intensive survey into theories of spectators and how to research this vexed historiographical problem. This course is not for people who hold the text sacred. We will be focusing on what people do with films, radio, and television, not necessarily what we as academic scholars think they ought to do.

## Readings

Assigned readings are available as follows:

Assigned readings are available as follows:  
At bookstores and on overnight reserve at the Perry-Castenada Library

Ang, Jen. Watching Dallas.

Barker, Martin and Kate Brooks. *Knowing Audiences*.

Barker, Martin and Kate Brooks. *Knowing Audience*. Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.

Jenkins, Henry. *Texual Poachers*.

Jenkins, Henry. *Sexual Power*.  
Stacey, Jackie. *Star Gazing*.

Stacey, Jackie. Star Gazing.  
Staiger, Janet. Interpreting Films.

Stanger, Janet. *Interpreting Films*.  
Taylor, Helen. *Scarlett's Women*

Taylor, Helen. *Scarlett's Women*. At Longhorn's (26th and Guadalupe) in two course packets:

## Packet J--Weeks 1-6

### **Packet I--Weeks 1-6**

## **Course Requirements and Grading**

**Course Requirements and Grading** Required for this course are an active participation in class discussion; careful reading of texts and viewing of the films; one classroom presentation on readings assigned for the week; a series of activities related to the successful completion of an original research paper; and help to your colleagues as they prepare their research papers.

- #### 1. Class participation (20%)

1. Class participation (20%)  
Quality discussion includes asking good questions as well as offering interpretations or analysis of the material. Synthesizing, advising, and directing others to maximize their efforts is important.

- ## 2. Classroom Presentation on Material (10%)

**2. Classroom Presentation on Material (10%)**  
You will be responsible for presenting a 15-minute maximum presentation of part of one week's reading material, and then opening up the discussion by setting out 3 or 4 questions for the group to consider during discussion. I will help facilitate during the discussion phase of the class.

- ### 3. Draft of research paper (20%)

DUE Monday, November 22, Noon, to team and me.

Late papers will not be accepted.

- #### **4. Responses to your Team's Research Paper Drafts (10%)**

DUE Wednesday, November 24, Noon, to me.

Late papers will not be accepted.

5. Final draft of research paper (40%).

DUE Thursday, December 9, Noon, to me.

Late papers are not possible.

Film screenings are free. Your course fees have paid for them.

No incompletes in the course unless a real crisis occurs. In that case, do not hesitate to talk with me as soon as possible.

Students will have an opportunity to evaluate the course at its conclusion.

## SYLLABUS

WK

DATE

CLASS

1

8-26

Introduction

Staiger, *Interpreting Films* (1992), 3-97

2

Theoretical and Methodological Possibilities

8-30 Screening (ca. 120m)

Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show (1902, E. S. Porter, 3m)

Before the Nickelodeon (1983, Charles Musser)

The Finish of Brigit McKeen (1902)

Terrible Teddy, The Grizzly King (1901)

Sampson-Schley Controversy (Aug-Sept 1901)

Taking President McKinley's Body from the Train, Canton, Ohio (1901)

Execution of Czolgosz (Oct 1901)

Elephants Shooting the Chutes (1904)

Trapeze Disrobing Act (1901, Porter, 1m)

Uncle Tom's Cabin (1903, Porter, 20m)

The Suburbanite (1904, Biograph, 8m)

The Unexpected Guest (1909, Lubin, 15m)

A Florida Enchantment (1914, Vitagraph, 45m)

9- 2 Class

Hebdige, Subculture (1979), 5-19, 73-127

Bennett, "Text and Social Process" (1982), 3-14

Radway, "Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies" (1984), 465-86

Ellsworth, "Illicit Pleasures" (1986), 45-56

Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* (1992), 9-85

Crawford and Chaffin, "The Reader's Construction of Meaning" (1986), 3-30

Hoijer, "Reception of Television Narration" (1992), 283-304

3

Early Cinema and its Spectators

9- 6 No Screening--Labor Day

9- 8 Class

Mayne, "Immigrants and Spectators" (1982), 32-41

Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction" (1986), 63-70

Staiger, *Interpreting Films* (1992), 101-23

Staiger, *Bad Women* (1995), 72-74

Brasell, "A Seed for Change" (1997), 3-21

4

The Birth of a Nation Controversy

9-15 Screening

The Birth of a Nation (1915, D. W. Griffith)

9-17 Class

- Carbine, "'The Finest Outside the Loop': Motion Picture Exhibition in Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1905-1928" (1990), 9-41  
 Waller, "Another Audience: Black Moviegoing, 1907-16" (1992), 3-25  
 Waller, "Black Nickelodeon" (1993), 28-31  
 Ogihara, "The Exhibition of Films for Japanese Americans in Los Angeles During the Silent Film Era" (1990), 81-87  
 Simcovitch, "The Impact of Griffith's *BIRTH OF A NATION* on the Modern Ku Klux Klan" (1972), 45-54  
 Bergquist and Greenwood. "The Protest Against Racism: *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* in Ohio" (1974), 39-44  
 Staiger, *Interpreting Films* (1992), 139-153
- 5 Early Broadcasting and its Publics**  
 9-22 Screening  
 Foolish Wives (1922, Erich von Stroheim, 107m)  
 9-24 Class  
 Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922* (1987), 187-215, 292-314  
 Covert, "'We May Hear Too Much': American Sensibility and the Response to Radio, 1919-1924" (1984), 199-220.
- 6 Stars, Fans, Desire, Self-Regulation, Production**  
 9-27 Screening  
 Son of the Sheik (1926, George Fitzmaurice, 72m)  
 9-30 Class  
 Staiger, *Interpreting Films* (1992), 124-38  
 Hansen, *Babel and Babylon* (1991), 243-94  
 Studlar, *This Mad Masquerade* (1996), 150-98  
 Stacey, *Star Gazing* (1994)  
 Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* (1992), 152-276  
 Staiger, "The Romances of the Blonde Venus" (1997), 5-20
- 7 Romance**  
 10- 4 Screening  
 Gone with the Wind (1939, Victor Fleming, 222m)  
 10- 8 Class  
 Taylor, *Scarlett's Women* (1989)  
 Radway, *Reading the Romance* (1984), 119-156  
 RESEARCH QUESTION AND ONE-PAGE PROPOSAL DUE IN CLASS
- 8 "Alternative" Romance Readings in the Hollywood Era before 1970**  
 10-11 Screening  
 A Star Is Born (1954, George Cukor, 154m)  
 10-14 Class  
 Noriega, "'Something's Missing Here!' Homosexuality and Film Reviews during the Production Code from 1934-1962" (1990), 20-41  
 Staiger, *Interpreting Films* (1992), 154-177  
 Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer* (1993), 39-62  
 Weiss, "'A Queer Feeling When I Look at You': Hollywood Stars and Lesbian Spectatorship in the 1930s" (1992), 30-50  
 Williamson, "'Draped Crusaders': Disrobing Gender in *The Mark of Zorro*" (1997), 3-16.
- 9 Art Cinema and the Avant Garde**

- 10-18 Screening  
 Report (1965, Bruce Connor, 15m)  
 Days of Heaven (1978, Terrence Malick, 95m)
- 10-21 Class  
 Budd, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari": Conditions of Reception" (1981),  
 41-9  
 Smythe, Lusk, and Lewis, "Portrait of an Art-Theater Audience" (1953), 28-  
 50  
 Twomey, "Some Considerations on the Rise of the Art-Film Theatre" (1956),  
 239-47  
 Staiger, Interpreting Films (1992), 178-95
- 10 Comedy and Parody; Serials and Soap Operas  
 10-25 Screening  
 All in the Family episode  
 Dallas episode
- 10-28 Class  
 Staiger, Interpreting Films (1992), 196-209  
 Leckenby and Surlin, "Incidental Social Learning and Viewer Race: 'All in  
 the Family' and 'Sanford and Son'" (1976), 481-94  
 Staiger, "All in the Family," Must See TV (forthcoming), ca. 41 ts pages  
 Ang, Watching Dallas (1982)  
 Katz and Liebes, "Decoding Dallas: Notes from a Cross-Cultural Study"  
 [1984], 419-32  
 Brown, "Knowledge and Power: An Ethnography of Soap-Opera Viewers"  
 (1991), 178-98
- 11 Neo-Hollywood Margins: Underground Movies, Camp, Pornography, Cult Movies  
 11- 1 Screening  
 Batman episode  
 The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975, Jim Sharman, 95m)
- 11- 4 Class  
 Hoberman, and Rosenbaum, Midnight Movies (1983), 1-76, 174-213  
 Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'" [1964], 275-92  
 Staiger, "Finding Community in the Early 1960s" (forthcoming), 61 ts pp  
 Austin, "Portrait of a Cult Film Audience: The Rocky Horror Picture Show"  
 (1981), 43-54  
 Torres, "The Caped Crusader of Camp: Pop, Camp, and the Batman Television  
 Series" (1996), 238-55.  
 Williams, Hard Core (1989), 85-92  
 Dyer, "Coming to Terms" (1985), 27-29  
 Waugh, "Gay vs. Straight," (1985), 30-35  
 Champagne, "Stop Reading Films!'" (1997), 76-97
- 12 Black Images/Black Spectators  
 11- 8 Screening  
 The Cosby Show episode  
 Shaft (1971, Gordon Parks, 100m)
- 11-11 Class  
 Hillerman, Sacred Clowns (1993), 138-143  
 Carter, Kevin L. "Black Audiences don't watch, they talk to movies"  
 (1996), E6  
 Cripps, "Amos 'n' Andy and the Debate Over American Racial Integration"  
 (1983), 33-54  
 Friedman, "Responses of Blacks and Other Minorities to Television Shows of  
 the 1970s about Their Groups" (1978), 85-102

- hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" (1993), 288-302  
 Fazal and Woher, *The Cosby Show: Some Black and White Audience Perceptions and Possibilities* (1989)  
 Staiger, "The Cosby Show," Must See TV (forthcoming), ca. 25 ts pages  
 Brown and Schulze, "The Effects of Race, Gender, and Fandom on audience Interpretations of Madonna's Music Videos" (1990), 88-102
- 13      Violence  
 11-15     Screening  
           Judge Dredd (1995, Danny Cannon, 96m)  
 11-18     Class  
           Barker and Brooks, *Knowing Audiences* (1998)
- 14      Conclusions  
 11-22     NOON: RESEARCH PAPER DRAFT DUE TO YOUR TEAM AND ME  
           No screening  
 11-24     NOON: TEAM'S RESPONSES DUE TO ME TO RETURN TO YOU  
 11-25     No Class--Thanksgiving
- 15      Conclusions  
 11-29     No Screening  
 12- 2     Class--conclusions

Finals Week

12- 9     NOON: RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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- Barker, Martin and Kate Brooks. *Knowing Audiences: Judge Dredd, Its Friends, Fans and Foes*. Luton, England: University of Luton Press, 1998.
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen, 1979. [To read pp. 5-19, 73-127]
- Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. NY: Routledge, 1992. [To read pp. 9-85, 152-276.]
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Reading packet

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- Bennett, Tony. "Text and Social Process: The Case of James Bond," *Screen Education*, no. 41 (Winter/Spring 1982), 3-14.
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- Dyer, Richard. "Coming to Terms: Male Gay Porn," *Jump Cut* 30 (1985), 27-29.
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- Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle*, 8, no. 3/4 (1986), 63-70.
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- hooks, bell. "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara. NY: 1993. Pp. 288-302.
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- Torres, Sasha. "The Caped Crusader of Camp: Pop, Camp, and the Batman Television Series," in *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*, ed. Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley and Jos, Esteban Muñoz. Durham, NC: 1996. Pp. 238-55.
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- Williams, Linda. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy" of the Visible*. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1989. Pp. 85-92.
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